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PREACHED BY

## HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A STRUGGLE.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."—HEB. xii., 2, 3.

If, in any country, there is war, but no disturbance; if the great thoroughfares are as they always have been; if commerce knows its appointed channels, and flows in them; if public bodies are not convoked; if the government shows no special anxiety or excitement, we say that it is some trifling quarrel—some outbreak on the border, bearing no proportion at all to the force that is arrayed against it, and not of enough significance to enter into and inflame the thoughts of the people: but when the whole atmosphere is hot with excitement; when men forget their daily business, and almost their daily bread; when whatever may be private calamity or private prosperity there is an over-mastering theme of general interest, so that strangers become acquaintances, and friends forget everything but that great theme (as once, not long ago, in our own history and experience), then we say that the conflict is tremendous, that the warfare must reach to the very bottom of things, or there could be no such preparations and no such excitement.

When you open the books of the New Testament, and perceive that men are called to a new life, to a higher business than that which has ordinarily occupied their thoughts and their hands, what is the language of them? Is there there the picture of an unwrinkled brow? Is there there a smiling lip? Is there there the voice of music, dulcet and soothing? Or is the spirit of the New Testament intense,

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earnest, almost fierce? How does it speak of the work to which men are called? As something that they can take on the way, together with other things? Or is it that which shall tax the understanding, and task the conscience—yea, surpass human endeavor, and demand for its execution the down-sending of divine power, and the inspiration, the guidance and the potency of the Holy Ghost? What is the way in which the New Testament speaks of the Christian life? "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," saith the sacred word. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." These are some of the words of the New Testament. Are they the words of apostles that magnify with a heated zeal the thought of their Master? Nay, but hear the Master himself saying, "If any man come unto me and hate not his father and wife and brother, if any man come to me and take not up his cross, he shall not be my disciple,—he is not worthy of me."

These are the metaphorical terms. This is language stretched till it seems almost unnatural, to bear the burden of the divine conception of that life to which we are called. It is true we are told, in other places, that it is an easy life. It is true we are told that the yoke is easy and the burden is light. That is a fact, too; just as it is a fact that the harvest song is pleasant, though it is not a fact that the spring plowing and harrowing are pleasant.

Things accomplished are noble and satisfying, but things unaccomplished require, during the campaign, all soldierly qualities of patience and endurance, and do not give contentment.

So it is true that we are called, in the New Testament, both ways: we are called to be vigilant, to be watchful, to be fervent, and to know that our enemy, the devil, goes about, sometimes as a serpent, and sometimes as a roaring lion—mischievous either way. We are commanded to watch day and night, and to be always ready, as the Son of Man may come when we know not. Not only are we told that, but we are told that the ways are ways of pleasantness, and

that all the paths are peace. We are told of the blessedness of the various experiences of life. We are told how the peaceable fruit of righteousness is worked out in those who are exercised thereby. And both things are true, one pertaining to the beginning, and the other to the consummation of Christian experience.

But the main representation of the New Testament, as addressed to men in this world, is intense pressure—as if the things which we are liable to lose were of such transcendent value that no being could afford to lose them; as if the things that we are liable to inherit of pain, dismay and shame, were such as no self-respecting soul could endure for a moment to contemplate; as if the ends and issues to which we are called lifted themselves above all ordinary experiences. Wealth is as nothing compared with that to which we are called; and pleasures, as they develop themselves in ordinary life, are not to be mentioned in comparison with the higher ends which we are to seek as Christian men. We are to go into the Christian life, not languidly, not luxuriously, not easily, and as it were sunshined into ripeness, hanging on the bough, and doing nothing ourselves. That is not the voice of the New Testament. We are to be girded like warriors. We are to put on the sword of the Spirit, and every part of the armor offensive and defensive. We are to contend, and, having done all, to stand. Without a time for ungirding, without a time for laying aside the armor, we are to stand, when we have done all, and wait, equipped. This is the language of the New Testament.

Well, then, what is that character to which we are called, and of which such things can be true? Now, it is not true that any such exertion as this is required, if only that amount of piety is demanded which we ordinarily see displayed in Christian households. It is extravagant language with which to characterize what is ordinarily accepted as sufficient for the life of a Christian household.

Look at the condition of men who are called to church life. Men find themselves acting wrongfully: that is, they are careless; they go nowhere to church; they swear a little, ride out on Sunday a little, drink a little, lie a little, cheat a

little,—they do a great many little things that they think and say are wrong. "We are in the flesh," they say, "and of course we do wrong."

By-and-by they are roused up, and they tell you that they are going to reform, that they have reformed, that they have joined the church. Now, what is it? Well, they have stopped swearing. Whatever they may think, they do not utter anything. They have stopped lying—in the main. Of course, all ships leak a little. At any rate, they have set out to stop. They do not ride for pleasure or answer business letters any more on Sunday. They go to church. They pay their rents—their pew-rents. They settle their accounts in business regularly. They avoid the extremes of eating and of drinking. They do not steal, or murder, or commit adultery. They abstain from all the staring vices.

I am not ridiculing these attainments thus far; but this I say: it is absurd to apply the intensive language of the New Testament to only this. Decency and morality do not require any such strain or any such inspiration as the language of the New Testament requires; and a man can be a good citizen of the commonwealth without any such paroxysm of virtue, of reform, or of anything else. A man can be a reputable church-member and not put forth any such extraordinary zeal.

"Take up your cross and join the church"—what does that mean? Why, it means that you are to be willing to take up the cross and tell your companions that you have experienced religion. Then you are to take up the cross and go down into the baptistery before the congregation and be baptized. That is about the cross which men take up when they join the church, in so far as the mere act of joining is concerned. Is that taking up a cross? Is that warfare? Is that all that is meant by the extravagant language of the New Testament? If it be all, it *is* extravagant language. I aver that if a man lives on an average according to the morals of the community in which he is, it is easier for him to live so than not to live so. If he accept the average morality in that class and circle where he moves, it requires no great carrying of the cross and no intensiveness, no special watch-

ing, no observance of prayer and imploration. There must be something else. The family life wherein the young soul is trained for the performance of its virile duties—it cannot be this that is meant. It cannot be what is ordinarily called church life, because church life is not disagreeable—it is very pleasant. It does not require such herculean endeavors. That cannot be referred to by these intensive expressions of inspiration. Is there anything, then, in Christian life which justifies such language as this ?

Let us look and see whether there are not certain elements in Christian character which are to be secured only by the most stringent human effort, under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit itself.

Look, for example, at the development of selfishness, in all its multiplied forms among men. The living for your own self at the sacrifice of others, the neglect of others or indifference towards them—that is selfishness. Seeking your own good for its sake first and mainly—that is selfishness. That is nature. It is that which every animal that is born is impelled to. It is the unweaned child's necessity to seek sleep, to seek sustenance, to seek its own little functions in the narrow circle of its life. It is put to it by the laws of the world in which it is born (the lower tier of laws, for it is born an animal) ; but when it begins to develop and come on to the higher planes of its organization, instead of seeking its own existence, its own food, its own sleep, its own thought, and its own pleasure, an obligation is laid upon the child to think, not of its own things alone, but of the things of others, and to love others as it loves itself.

That law is to go through the whole realm of man's reason. It is to be the law of imagination ; it is to be the law of honor ; it is to be the law of traffic ; it is to be the law of social intercourse—namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." You are to think for your neighbor, and fore-think for him. You are to avoid wounding him, as you would avoid wounding yourself. You are to work for him, as you would work for yourself. You are to feel pain at his downfall, as you would at your own downfall. You are to rejoice in his uprising, as you would in your own

uprising. You are to carry that spirit of living for others as you live for yourself right through your whole life—your store life, your ship life, your street life, your political life, your professional life, every part of your life.

Let a man take the simple element of selfishness, and undertake to live every day—morning, noon, and night—so in sympathy with his fellow men that he can appeal to God, with the daily sun, and say, "I am holding myself to this—the loving of my neighbor as myself."

Now then, I ask you, Can any man do that easily? Did you ever do it? Did you ever try to do it? When you think of yourself, and when I put the question to you as to whether you are living in that way, do not you smile at the idea? When this subject is broached in a congregation, is not the predominant feeling this: "That is metaphorical; that is a good ideal, but God knows that nobody could ever reach it"? You cannot do it; and you must agree with me, that if a man does it, he does it by the employment of every intensive force that belongs to his nature—by will, by watchfulness, and by zeal; and more, that in doing it he commends himself to the inspiration of God, knowing that he is to live in the midst of multitudes of men, and in all relationships to them, and yet live, or attempt to live, in thought, in feeling, in business, and in affectionate service, so that he can fulfill the command, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Why, men feel that to love God with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, is a great deal easier than to love their neighbor as themselves, because they have so little to do with God; because he is to them, in the main, an abstraction. They neither see him nor hear his voice. In their conception, he is an omnipotent sovereign. But men they meet every moment, and at every turn. They live with men, and are pushed and crowded and pinched and excited by them. They are in rivalry with men in all the thousand departments of life. And yet, they are to carry themselves in such a way as that benignant sympathy, and a true fellowship of love, shall abide in them as toward others.

Can any man pursue that life? Does any man pursue it? Is there a single man who, having any conception of it, is not obliged to lay his hand on his mouth, and his mouth in the dust, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? And yet, it is a part of the royal law by which God lives, by which heaven is governed, and by which the universe is to be controlled. And when it comes to this—"Every man is my brother; every man, like myself, has a common Father; and I owe myself to every creature on the globe; and first to those that are lowest, and that need me most"—who leads that life? Into what creature does that enter as a fundamental conception? They would silence me if I were to preach that there is no Trinity; if I were to proclaim any theory which was not orthodox on the subject of the Atonement, ten thousand voices would be lifted up to denounce such monstrous teaching: but when I say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (and love means willingness to use your whole self, if not to sacrifice yourself, for the sake of others; that is Christ's example; that is his daily life; that is the life toward which you aspire—the life which consists in loving your neighbor as yourself), men say, "That is enthusiasm. Of course, that is a kind of preaching which some folks like; but it is a sort of enthusiastic gush. People sentimentalize about that"! I bring to you the fundamental law of the universe; I bring to you that on which God's own throne stands; I declare to you that the new life is a life in which selfishness is slain, and in which beneficence reigns; and men are so heathen in Christianity, ministers have so long been preaching as a vain show intellectual ideas, that they do not recognize what is the marrow, what is the real life and power, of all religion. Men go browsing like oxen, eating like lions, gnawing each other like worms, plunging upon one another like the eagle on his prey; and that, it is said, is vigor; that is power; that is justice; and it is thought that no society can stand without those strong foundations, those solid sills, those firm corner-posts. But I declare, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor as thyself;" and I declare that you are to carry out that idea of loving your neighbor as yourself into the household, and into your

associations, not only with those that love you, but with those that hate you, everywhere,—and men say, "That is the very slopping over of imbecility!"

Now, where are they who shall dare to stand on the foundation of the supreme law of the universe and assert that the declaration of impartial and inexhaustible benevolence is mere sentimentalism? I do not say they are infidels: I merely say they are Christians who see men as trees walking. I say they are men whose eyes have been touched by the Holy Ghost, but that they have been touched only once, and that they need a second touch.

Take another matter, which falls under this head, and is worthy of special mention. Let us look at the way in which pride acts in the human conscience—pride, that is a peculiar inflection of selfishness. Let us look at the sense of superiority which it gives to individual men—and that without any regard to the facts of the case. Pride is a sentiment, not a judgment. We are born with it. We find it in us. It plays down upon our thought, and is not a creature of our thought. Thereby men have a sense of I-ness, of sovereignty, of superiority, of great worth in themselves. More or less, everybody has it, but in some it is dominant, and swells out from the ordinary level of their experience, as a mountain swells out from the level of the plain in which it stands.

Now, the command of the Gospel is, "Humble thyself before God." "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Blessed are those who do not think of themselves as great, and are like little children that look up to those who are greater, and are perpetually soliciting.

Does any man undertake to overcome pride when he joins the church? He goes to the minister, and tells him that he has gone wrong all his life; that he has left undone things which he ought to have done, that he has done things which he ought not to have done, that there is no health in him, and that he desires to become a communicant of the church. He is received into the church, and he institutes family prayer, and is reverent on Sunday; but what does he do with that pride?

Now, I do not undertake to say, that, in order to be a

Christian, a man must have a successful school in himself; but I do say, that he must attempt to control himself. How many are there, in the church or out of the church, who feel it to be a part of their religious duty, and one of the evidences of their Christian character, that they should set themselves to the work of gaining control of their domineering pride, which lifts them above and out of sympathy with others, and makes them feel themselves gods among men? If a man recognizes this as a part of his duty, and undertakes it, is pride a thing that he can control easily? That it can be controlled, we know. We have in Paul an eminent instance of a man who was excessively proud. Pride pervaded his whole being, and had for its auxiliaries strong understanding, intense conscience, and immense executive force; so that, feeling himself to be a man called to cleanse the old Jewish church of sectaries, he led the van: but when he was converted on his persecuting errand, a change passed over him; yet he did not lose his pride. He was as proud during the last years of his life as at the beginning of it. At the beginning, though, his pride was like palisades—angular volcanic stones; while, at the end, it was like lime-stone mountains, covered with foliage and all sweet flowers. He did accomplish the task of subduing his pride to Christ and to love, so that it became the servitor of mankind, and worked for others instead of himself. "Who is offended, and I burn not?" he says. "Who is wronged, and I am not his champion?" was the spirit of Paul. He stood for manhood in himself. He stood for the rights, the dignities, the honors of his fellow-men, and would suffer for them.

Now, have any of you ever undertaken to skirmish with pride, even in a small way? If so, how was the battle? What was your luck? How long have you been a Christian or a member of the church? Everybody says you are a respectable Christian, but does everybody know what are the conflicts inside of you? Do men know what are your thoughts and feelings, and what is the whole by-play within? Do *you* know? Have you ever contested pride? Have you ever known that it was not subdued to divine love, and that

it was blind to the uses of charity? Have you ever recognized that? If you have ever undertaken to subdue pride, has it not required all the strength of your being, and, more than that, all the power and the cleansing inspiration of the Divine Spirit, to do it?

Have you ever undertaken to subdue, with its ten thousand temptations, the love of praise, which, in its extreme form, is called *vanity*—a desire to live such a life as should make you an object of the kindly thought and feeling and commendation of those about you? I think there is no one feeling that has so many little loopholes as vanity. I think there is no one feeling that has so many little deceits and equivocations and deceptions; so many little plans and plots; so many pretenses; so many false colors; so many lures; so many things that are calculated to deceive. There is nothing in the world that one understands so little as this trait in himself. There is nothing that so dazzles the mind, and gives such false colors. Did you ever go to a window with a lens, and have the light dance through it, and see the colors and parti-colors that came from the pure white ether? Such are the dazzling thoughts and feelings which are in conflict in a man's nature when under the dominion of vanity, or the love of praise. Have you undertaken to contest it? Have you deliberately taken a gauge of that enemy? Have you undertaken it before God? Have you said, "I will have no rest until I am conscious that I have subdued this element to the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ"?

Take the element of passion as a temper—as a vengeful feeling. Look at the facility of it, and the readiness with which you are touched and with which you flame out with anger. Consider the number of things in regard to which, with unregulated facility, your temper blazes out. Call to mind the fearful intensity of it, and the unruliness of it under certain provocations. Oh, how penitent a man's temper is when he is good-natured! "The anger that I felt yesterday seems very queer to me to-day," says a man. Yes, an old empty gun is queer enough; but when it is just fired off at you, then it is not so queer. Temper—how much of

unhappiness in the household, between husband and wife, between brother and sister, and between friend and friend, comes from it! It is a perpetual cause of soreness, of ill-feeling, of uneasiness and apprehension. What a torment is this uncontrolled temper of men! Many men, when they come into a Christian life, so far conquer their tempers as to hold their tongues—and that is a good thing. Oh, that men might learn even so much of Christianity as to hold their tongues when they are under the influence of temper! because many feelings are smothered by being raked up in silence. But that is not enough with temper. Though it may be an alleviation, it is not a substantial victory over it.

What is there in your experience? What view of God have you? What divine grace let down from heaven, what sense of duty, what conscience-bound obligation, is there resting on you in regard to this matter? Do you say to yourself, "Well, all men get angry; I belong to my kind; of course we do not expect to be saints because we are Christians"? No, I do not think any of you are in danger of being saints on account of your religion. But does your religion lead you to undertake the subjugation of your natural feelings? Does it lead you to say, "I have sworn to believe the thirty-nine articles, the Calvinistic creed, or the Arminian creed;" does it lead you to say, "I have accepted the policy of the Episcopal church, or any other church;" does it lead you to say, "I am bound to observe such and such ordinances"? Or does your religion mean the transformation, in a man, of pride, of selfishness, of envy, of lust, and of jealousy, so that they shall become transparent like the attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is that your conception of a religious life? If it is, has not your experience been such that you can say, "The natural man is not sufficient for the things of the spirit: the will is present with me, but how to perform I know not"?

If, then, this be the conception which you have of Christian life, that your lower faculties, your appetites and passions, the great controlling elements which make so much discord and mischief in the world, shall be subdued to reason, conscience and love, and if you are trying to live such

a life as that, then, next, do not you feel how pertinent is the declaration of the writer of the Hebrews,

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"?

Is there any man who, trying to live the life of Christ, does not need the personal and conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ every day and every hour? Shall one learn a trade, and none stand to teach him what are the methods and secrets thereof? Shall a man learn writing without a master? If one be a pupil, does he not need to go with his task to his teacher? Does he not need constantly to be shown, and to have his mistakes corrected? Does he not need to be stimulated or held back, as the case may be? And shall we undertake, unaided, that which is harder than any lesson in any school of science or of mechanic arts—harder than they have who learn any of the vocations of society? Is there any other task which is to be compared with that of those who are attempting to rebuild the soul, and indue themselves with Christian dispositions, in distinction from animal dispositions, such as pride and selfishness and anger?

Now, if any man is living without the need of Christ, he is living without a struggle; and he that is living without a struggle, (we have God's word for it), is a bastard, and not a son.

"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

If any man is living a Christian life without such a struggle as makes him feel day by day his own helplessness, his own utter insufficiency for that which is incumbent upon him; if a man is living without the feeling that he needs God, and that without him all his endeavors will be in vain—if any man is living a Christian life so, it is because he is in a false security. The soul in the new life needs the vivifying influence of God every day.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider [explore, weigh, think much about] him that endured such

**contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."**

That ideal Christ; that image of divine excellence; that One who has taught us how to carry pride without sin, how to exterminate selfishness, how to be royal, and yet the companion of the lowest and the least—that noblest Christ, that drew to him the needy upon earth, and was himself perfect among the imperfect, and yet not arrogant nor vain; that Saviour who did not look down because He was superior, but who was as equable and sweet as a mother to her children—look unto him, lest ye be wearied of this great conflict; for our idea of what it is to be a Christian must be every day refreshed.

No shipmaster, if he can get observations every day, fails to take them every day, in order that he may know where he is, and how he is sailing; and no Christian on the voyage of life should do less than this. Every day we need to be cautioned against taking our ideas from customs, or from the easy permissions of the church, even. We must not put our faith in man, nor must we take our notions of what is right for us from even the best of those who are around about us. We may learn from them; but no man is our model: Christ is our model; and every day we must rectify our conception of what it is to be Christian men by looking unto Jesus, in order that we may build ourselves up after the ideal of a transformed and spiritualized character. We look to him because, without the sympathy of a heavenly Spirit like him, we should grow discouraged.

There is nothing in public sentiment or in public institutions which helps a man in the direction of self-sacrifice. The ideal life of a true Christian man must be perpetually refreshed from the heavenly soul; and we are to look to Christ for that life as well as that example, for that inspiration as well as that ideal, day by day.

We are to look unto him all the more because we are told that he has had to strive in the self-same manner that we are striving; that he has been tempted in all respects, in all faculties, as we are, and yet without sin; that he has been made a perfect High Priest; that he has been made

the captain of our salvation, by suffering in our place as we suffer, so that he knows, inwardly and outwardly, all our wants, and is a Saviour in the forefront of heaven, now advanced in all power to help those who are willing and anxious to live as he has lived.

We look unto him, not only as an example and as an inspiration, but as a sympathizing friend, who has glorified our nature and sanctified it, and who is administering his providence and grace for the very special end of helping all who desire to live above the world, above the senses, and in the true spirit life.

Christian brethren, it is that we may draw near to the Saviour that all the offices of instruction and all the ordinances in the house of God are mainly enjoined upon us. Their object is to bring us near to a realization of the great invisible world, of the glory of God, of the love of Christ, and of the power of that justice, of that righteousness, and of that abhorrence of evil which comes from love—the victorious power of that faith which works by love. All these we behold in the Lord Jesus Christ; and when our faith wavers, when we drift, when our watch ceases, when we stumble, when we fall into temptation, in all the emergencies of life, we need the same source of awakening, of deliverance, of consolation, and of sympathy—Jesus Christ.

And now, as we are about, as a church, pastor and people, to separate for some weeks—we that have been brought so near together by a common life in the church, by a common rejoicing in the truths of the Gospel, by common sympathies one with another, by common suffering, and by common hopes and victories—we ought to carry with us some common memorial, that we may not forget each other, and that we may feel our hearts still mutually responding, as they have done so many times before.

As in olden times lovers, when parting, agreed to look at a common star at evening and think of each other; as, many and many a time, hearts bound to hearts have promised, at a given hour or many hours of the day, to read the same passages, or to bow the knee in prayer together, that their love might minister to their zeal, and that their zeal might min-

ister to their love; so it would be well for us all if we that go away could take with us, or if we that stay at home could keep with us, some common souvenir of suggestion.

Let us, then, take this, every morning, as we rise—"Looking unto Jesus"; and when the bell strikes twelve at noon every day, let us, pastor and people, agree to say in our hearts, "Looking unto Jesus"; and when the sun goes down at evening, let us say together, "Looking unto Jesus"; and every time you say it, think of me; and every time I say it, I will think of you; and every time you and I say it, Jesus will think of us all; and in this common thought of each other, and of Him that loved us, and gave himself for us, let us go through the fiery days of summer; and when autumn begins to robe the earth in all its dying beauty, and to prefigure the glory of departure, let us come together again and report, that, "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," he has grown larger and more beautiful, and has become to us all the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

Now we sit down together, for the last time in a good while, to fellowship with each other—to a cheerful hope and a confident rejoicing in our Master, Jesus; for this bread broken is the body of Christ, broken, and this cup outpoured is the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of sins. Who owns the body of Christ that was broken? Every poor, tempted, weary-hearted sinner who wants divine medicine. Whose is the blood? Every soul's that wants washing. Does my venerable brother in Rome own Christ? The poorest Hottentot that is scorched on the plains of Africa, if he awakes and says, "Lord, have mercy on my soul," owns him. The poorest slave that grovels on the plantation owns Jesus, if he needs him, and takes him. Who owns the blood of the Lord symbolized? All sinners that need it. Who owns the cup? The heart that needs its medicine. Does the church own Christ? He is the world's. He belongs to human necessity—not to a sect; not to a party; not to a generation; not to an age: but to mankind; to each individual,—and not because the priest or the elder or the church told him that he might, but because God gave himself to every soul that would

take him. *You* own God, as God owns you; and the ownership which the son has in the father is as sweet in its way as the ownership which the father has in the son.

I ask you, therefore, to come to the table of the Lord, not because it is our communion: we do not own that table. I ask you, not because the body of Christ is given into our hands, to be dispensed according to our judgment. I say to every soul: Do not come because you are a member of the church; do not come because you are orthodox; but if you feel, "I am sinful, I in my soul desire and mean to overcome sin, and I need to look unto Jesus for help to do it," then, for these inward and spiritual reasons, I invite you to come and partake of the body and the blood of Christ Jesus. Now pervert that who wants to! Because you are sinful; because you desire by the power of God to live above your sins; because you believe that the broken body and shed blood of Christ symbolized will help you, therefore come. Come for spiritual reasons, for personal reasons, for inward reasons—not for external reasons, nor church reasons, nor authoritative reasons—because your soul needs, and here it shall have supply. Whether, therefore, you are a member of the church or not; whether you belong to any other sect, however diverse from us; whatever your philosophical views may be, if you are pervaded with a consciousness that you are so sinful and imperfect that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse you, come. If it will do you good, come.

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon you all. AMEN.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we rejoice in the light of this day. We rejoice in the opening door of the sanctuary. We rejoice in all the memories that rise thick about us; in the experiences that are witnesses of the past, and that with gathering force still bear witness to the grace of God, and to the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, our Saviour —for thou hast done exceeding abundantly more than we asked, or than we thought. Thou hast never left thy people nor forsaken them in darkness, in sickness, in trouble, or in temptation. Thou hast been faithful to all thy promises; and in this place of prayer we desire to bear witness together of the goodness of God—of his goodness in a thousand things most pleasant, and also of his goodness in things most painful; for the darkness is as wholesome to those who go through the night as the brightness of the day. Thou art He that knowest how to make sorrow and darkness fruitful of good; and thou dost interpret thy providence, saying to us, Whom I love I chasten.

We rejoice, O Lord, in looking back to our childhood, for the places wherein we were born; for those that surrounded us; for those who taught us by word and by example; for all the privileges and opportunities which we had in the way of life; for all the inspirations to good, and for the helps therein.

Thou hast multiplied thyself in nature, in providence, in society, and in the church. In all ways thou hast made thyself a manifold help. We look back on the whole career of our lives with wonder and with gladness, and draw for the future hope and inspiration therefrom.

And now we desire, O Lord, in the days that are to come, to be stronger, wiser, purer, more like thyself. We pray that we may not be contented in our present condition. We pray that we may not be willing to sit down with such attainments as we have. Evermore may we look to thee. Inspired by thy nature and by thine example may we reach to such a perfect subjection of every thought and feeling that we shall know the mind and will of Christ in our own mind and will, that so thou mayest fulfill thy word, and dwell in us, and abide with us.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to all those who are walking under the load and beneath the yoke, and who find them neither light nor easy. We beseech of thee that thou wilt perpetually teach them to make them both easy and light. We pray that thou wilt subdue obdurate wills, and that thou wilt inspire with a patient faith those that think they know as much as thou dost. We pray that those who suppose they understand thy truths may learn the wisdom of being little children. May they accept the lessons of thine administration, and accept them with cheerfulness as from God, though they know not all their meanings. We beseech of thee that pride of understanding may be corrected in us all. While we seek Christ Jesus may we ask, What shall be done with thy providences? rather than, Why hast thou sent them to us?

We beseech of thee that thou wilt help those that are tempted, whatever their temptation may be, whether it be in themselves, in their surroundings, or in their affairs. Will the Lord grant that they may be steadfast in their integrity, in their faith, and in their trust in God.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are in affliction; all those who are in the midst of divisive cares; and all who lack wisdom to direct them. May they trust thee. Thou givest wisdom to those that lack it, and thou upbraidest not; and we pray that every one may turn to thee for light and for guidance.

We beseech thee that thou wilt grant to this church thine abiding presence. As thou hast been with us in days gone by, even as a fire by night and as a cloud by day, so continue to manifest thyself in darkness and in light to this thy people. They *are* thine; with all imperfections, in the midst of struggles, in the midst of diverse experiences, with chequered light and shade, they are thine. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt still abide in the midst of this people, and inspire them with purer motives, with higher aims, and with a diviner spirit, so that they may go through life witnesses, not unapt, not misinterpreting, not misrepresenting the mind and the will of Christ, by showing forth his meekness, his helpfulness, his self-sacrifice, and his laborious zeal in doing good. And may they seek after righteousness. May they be discontented only with themselves; may they be patient with others. May they not be forbearing with their own wickednesses, and their own shortcomings, but may they be forbearing with others who fall into shortcomings and wickednesses. And we beseech of thee that thus they may be girded day by day for that conflict which lasts to the end.

O Lord, minister to thy people a sense of the nearness of things invisible—of their power, of their magnitude, of their glory, and of their beauty. May they dwell in faith, in-looking into the invisible; and there may their hope be as an anchor that shall hold them steadfast, no matter what storms may come.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt overrule all events for the honor of thy name, and for the furtherance of thy cause among men on earth. We pray for a greater spread of love among brethren. We pray that divisive influences may be overthrown. We pray that the things which make for peace and purity may be abundantly multiplied. We pray that churches may help each other and not hinder.

So may those who think themselves strong bear the infirmities of the weak. May those who think themselves wise forbear with the shortcoming knowledge of those who are less than they. May those who think themselves to be highest and first condescend to men of low estate, and bear their burdens. May men not strive to see who shall be first with an ungodly and worldly ambition, but may they strive to see who shall be first with wisdom; and may they become the ministers and the servants of all.

We pray that thou wilt grant that the cause of justice and peace may prevail among the nations of the earth. May all disturbances

which tend to break forth into war be taken away. May men learn that latest and hardest lesson, the lesson of love; and may they draw together in a holy brotherhood, nation joining to nation, until at last there shall be concord in all the earth; until from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, men shall learn to fear and love and reverence thee, and to honor and love one another. Thus may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

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